



# Complaints Policy and Procedure

14 March 2023

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Archdiocese of Liverpool aims to provide the highest possible levels of service to our parishes and schools, our priests and laity, our commercial partners, and the general public. It welcomes, both positive and negative, constructive feedback which can inform improvements in our services and deal with any issues of concern. This document sets out our policy and procedures for anyone wishing to make a complaint or provide feedback in connection with the Archdiocese of Liverpool's work.
- 1.2. This policy applies to an external complaint made against the Archdiocese of Liverpool or against one or more of its lay employees, volunteers or others acting on its behalf (Please see exclusions, including those against priests, deacons and seminarians, at 2 below).
- 1.3. All complaints will be treated sensitively, confidentially, within current GDPR legislation and within a specified timeframe.
- 1.4. At each stage of the procedure, the aim will be to reach a satisfactory conclusion, rather than escalate to the next level. The Archdiocese of Liverpool aims to resolve matters as swiftly and effectively as possible and promotes the use of informal resolution in the first instance.
- 1.5. Complaints should be submitted as soon as reasonably possible and will not normally be considered if submitted later than 28 working days after the incident. Complaints must be made in writing, either by letter or email (a form which may be used is attached), and addressed to the Chief operating Officer (COO) or, if the complaint is against the COO, to the Moderator of the Curia:

The Chief Operating Officer (or Moderator of the Curia if appropriate)  
Archdiocese of Liverpool,  
St Margaret Clitherow Centre,  
Croxteth Drive, Liverpool, L17 1AA  
reception@rcaol.org.uk

- 1.6. The letter or email of complaint must cover the nature of the complaint and describe the resolution you are seeking. Complainants must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

## 2. What is a Complaint?

2.1. For the purpose of this procedure, a complaint may be defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of service, action or lack of action by, or on behalf of, the Archdiocese of Liverpool

It may *or may not* be justified.

2.2. A complaint may relate to:

- inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, volunteer or others (such as a contractor)
- the quality and standard of service or failure to provide a service
- the quality of facilities
- the failure of the Archdiocese to follow an appropriate process

The list above is not exhaustive, and the Archdiocese will consider other matters as appropriate.

## 3. Third Party Complaints

A third-party complainant must have sufficient interest in the matter, or person, to which the complaint relates, and have been directly affected by the actions of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. It will be necessary for the third party to explain why they are bringing a complaint; their relationship with the parties; their interest and/or involvement in the matters raised; and how they have been directly affected by the actions of any persons acting on behalf of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

## 4. Exclusions

This policy does not cover:

4.1. Matters that have already been investigated through this or an equivalent complaints procedure including persistent and vexatious complaints.

4.2. Complaints relating to safeguarding will only be considered under this policy if they relate to the conduct of Archdiocese of Liverpool staff in their compliance with policies and practices. Other safeguarding matters will be dealt with by the safeguarding department under the appropriate policies and procedures.

- 4.3. Complaints relating to Archdiocesan church schools, where the individual school's complaints process should be used.
- 4.4. Complaints relating to local parochial matters, where the matter should be referred initially to the relevant Parish Priest.
- 4.5. Complaints relating to the conduct of priests, deacons or seminarians, which should be directed to the Archbishop of Liverpool. Religious Orders operating in our Parishes may have their own complaints policies and the Archdiocese will refer specific complaints through this route if this would be more appropriate. In such instances, the complainant will be formally notified in writing and alternative contact details will be provided.
- 4.6. Complaints from Archdiocese of Liverpool employees, who should use the Archdiocese Grievance Procedure.
- 4.7. Whistleblowing concerns from members of staff, who should use the Archdiocese Whistleblowing Procedure.
- 4.8. Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with, unless there is significant evidence of a valid case and good reason to protect the identity of the complainant.

## **5. The Complaints Procedure**

The procedure has three stages: Informal Resolution, Formal Stage (including Investigation) and Appeal

### **5.1. Informal Resolution**

- 5.1.1. Once a complaint has been received, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) will refer the matter to the relevant Departmental Director who will normally review and respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days. (If the complaint relates to a Director or the COO, the procedure will be conducted by the COO or Moderator as appropriate). We aim to respond to all complaints within the above timescale. However, if a complaint is very complex it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case we will keep the complainant informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay and the new deadline

5.1.2. The response may include the offer of a meeting to discuss the matter. Any outcome agreed by all parties at this stage will be set out in writing and the complaint procedure concluded as 'informal resolution'.

5.1.3. During any stage of the procedure, a complainant has the maximum of 28 days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

## 5.2. Formal Stage – Investigation

5.2.1. If you remain dissatisfied with the informal resolution, or the matter is appropriate for additional investigation, the Archdiocese of Liverpool will undertake further investigation.

5.2.2. The investigation will be conducted by an independent person commissioned by the Chief Operating Officer (or, if necessary, the Moderator of the Curia). The investigation may involve interviewing anyone involved and reviewing relevant paperwork.

5.2.3. The investigation will normally be completed within 28 working days. In exceptional circumstances (those which are beyond the control of the investigator) an extension can be requested by application to the Chief Operating Officer (or the Moderator of the Curia where appropriate).

5.2.4. The investigator will provide a report to the Chief Operating Officer (or Moderator of the Curia where appropriate), who will consider and consult on any action needed.

5.2.5. You will normally be provided with written feedback within 10 working days after completion of the investigation and this may be carried out face-to-face if appropriate.

5.2.6. Your desired resolution may request that disciplinary action to be taken against an employee. However, this decision is the responsibility of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. If disciplinary action is taken against a Archdiocese of Liverpool employee this will remain confidential to the individual concerned and no specific details of this will not be provided to the complainant.

### 5.3. Appeal

- 5.3.1. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation stage, you have 28 days from receipt of the written feedback to appeal against the decision. Any appeal should be submitted in writing and sent to the Chief Operating Officer (or Moderator of the Curia where appropriate),
- 5.3.2. On receipt of the letter of appeal, the Archdiocese of Liverpool will arrange for an appeal panel, normally consisting of at least two members who have had no prior involvement with the complaint to consider the appeal.
- 5.3.3. The Appeal Panel will consider the report, the comments of the Chief Operating Officer (or the Moderator of the Curia) and the view of the appellant before deciding the outcome of the appeal
- 5.3.4. The appeal panel will normally consider and respond to the appeal within 28 working days
- 5.3.5. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.

## 6. Variation

The Archdiocese of Liverpool may vary this procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest. For example, a complaint involving several members of staff may be handled by a person outside of Archdiocesan structures.

## 7. Charity Commission

Complaints can be made to the Charity Commission at any stage. The commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <http://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>

## 8. Privacy

Complaints records will be retained for 10 years. The archdiocesan Privacy policy can be found at <https://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/privacy>.

**9. Approval**

This policy was approved by the Diocesan Board of Trustees on:

The next review is due on or before:

## COMPLAINT FORM

**This form is to be used if you have a complaint about the services provided by the archdiocese of Liverpool or actions of its staff, which cannot be resolved informally.**

**Please note that:**

- all complaints relating to clergy (priests or deacons) or seminarians should be directed to the Archbishop of Liverpool and these will be dealt with under a separate procedure
- matters relating to schools should be dealt with under the school's own complaints procedure.
- it is extremely difficult to deal with anonymous complaints as evidence cannot easily be gathered – this may mean a complaint cannot be considered.
- we aim to acknowledge all complaints within 48 hours of receipt and to issue a formal response within 21 days (this may not always be possible)

**Full Name:**

**Contact address, including postcode:**

**Contact telephone number(s):**

Home No. \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile No \_\_\_\_\_

Other No \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail address:**

*If you tick the box you must give reasons – your details would then be disclosed to a respondent only if the COO, or Moderator of the Curia, so directs.*

**I request that my identity should not be disclosed for the following reasons:**

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**I wish to make a complaint about:**

*If you can, please state the name(s) of any person(s) you wish to complain about, and the position held by that person at the relevant time.*

Name(s) and Position held:

*Complaints which are submitted more than 28 days after the incident will not*

**The issue I am complaining about took place on the following date(s):**



<i>normally be considered unless there is a good reason why the complaint was not made earlier</i>	..... ..... .....
	<b>If this complaint is out of the 28 day period please explain why it should still be considered:</b>  ..... ..... ..... ..... .....

**I wish to complain about the following:**

<i>Please summarise the facts of your complaint.</i>	..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....
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**I have tried to resolve this informally by:**

<i>It is normally better to resolve issues, for all concerned, by informal discussions. This takes the heat out of a formal complaint if it is possible to do so. Please summarise here the steps that you have taken to resolve this issue informally.</i>	..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....
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**I attach evidence in support of my complaint, consisting of the following statements and other documents:**

<i>Please provide evidence in support of your complaint, along with this form, and list that evidence here.</i>	1. ....
	2. ....
	3. ....

This could be documentary evidence or supporting statements from other people for example.	4. ....
	5. ....
	6. ....
	7. ....
	8. ....
<i>(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</i>	
<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Dated:</b>	
<b>Date received:</b>	
<b>Date referred:</b>	

**Please return this form to:**

The Chief Operating Officer (or Moderator of the Curia if appropriate)  
 Archdiocese of Liverpool,  
 St Margaret Clitherow Centre,  
 Croxteth Drive, Liverpool, L17 1AA  
 reception@rcaol.org.uk